

Conditions by EmeraldTulip

Series: [Curiosity Voyage \[2\]](#)

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Summary:

The world doesn't revolve around her, but he's pretty sure his might have.

Conditions

Author's Note:

part two of my short story collection. this one is also posted on my tumblr, and it's one of my all-time favorite pieces. I hope you all enjoy!

She's distant, and he thinks it could be his fault.

He thinks he might know what he did but has no clue how to fix it, and she's a million miles away even though she's sitting right there, dark eyes glazed over as she stares out the window.

The storm outside whips a little harder than it should.

—

"It's out there," she says, eyes closed.

Thunder rumbles outside.

"What is?"

Her eyes open, and for a moment he thinks he sees the beginning of the universe in them.

"What I'm looking for."

—

There's something holding her back. He can tell there's somewhere she'd rather be, and not just out of class.

"Feelings," she always replies when he asks. "The feelings keep me here."

—

"For you."

—

"It's him," she tells him, bitter yet understanding. "It's always been him."

And it rings true for him, in a deeply buried part of his mind, but he wishes he could comprehend what she meant.

—

"Goodbye."

Standard daily departure—or, at least, he thought it was.

—

"She's gone," Will says, frantic.

He's frozen.

There's a piece of paper in Will's hand, he's out of breath and drenched from running through the rain. "She... *she*."

The paper passes from cold hand to numb hand, the faintest heat rising with their fingers brushing.

She's gone.

—

Life doesn't go back to normal. She was what made it strange in the first place, sure, but—

But.

And that's the thing, isn't it? He did this—he could have stopped it. But. He misses her, but. It's too late for that.

Life doesn't go back to normal.

—

The world didn't revolve around her, but he's pretty sure his might have.

—
It's not the same.

The magic is gone, static tries to replace it, but they're just not identical. Just comparable, maybe.

Magic and static are two different things. The static is deep and dark while the magic was airy and bright. They are meant for different things and reflect a different person.

And yet.

—
Sometimes he sees Will zone out. Glassy eyes, blank expression—sometimes the hint of a smile.

"What are you thinking about?" he asks, and Will shakes his head, wistful grin still on his face.

"Nothing at all," he says.

—
They're so similar, and he hates that. He loves it, too. They're not identical, not by a long shot. But.

Comparable.

—
It's not the same, but.

It's bearable.

Sometimes he almost remembers her fondly. But.

And that's just it: he loved her, but.

—
"It's you, Will," he says, and suddenly it's three years ago and

someone is telling him the exact same thing, the other way around.
“It’s always been you.”

(If he saw the beginning of the universe in her eyes, he finds all of existence in his.)

—

She’s gone, she’s not coming back, she’s alive and doing what she needs to do.

That’s what Will says, anyway.

(He squeezes his hand.)

They’re traveling parallel, now—at the same time, making the same progress, but never crossing paths.

She and Will have always been parallel, mirror images of each other.

—

They’re so similar. They’re so comparable. But.

They’re not the same.

He sees this now.

—

They could have been electric together.

Magic and static, static and magic.

They could have been good friends.

—

“Are you okay, Mike?” Will is going to ask one day.

“Is El?” he’ll reply.

“Yes.” He will know—he always knows.

“Then I think I am, too.”

—

One day, he really will be okay. They all will.

—

“Are you happy, Mike?” Will is going to ask one day, and Mike will have no reservations before answering:

“With you? Always.”

—

They’re similar, not the same.

Comparable, but different.

He believes this now.

—

Static slowly fills the void where the magic was, and though it doesn’t feel the same, it almost feels... good.

It crackles and pops on his skin instead of settling smoothly like stardust, sets his nerves on fire instead of floating him in a cloud.

Static is science; tangible and real.

Magic is a beautiful fiction.

He thinks that as much as he loved the magic, he could learn to love the static even more.

—

She never meant to hurt him, he knows. But.

He never meant to hurt her, but.

She never expected him to forgive her, but.

He never expected her to forgive him, but.

—

They had too many conditions. Not enough time.

—

She knew. El knew.

—

With Will, Mike loves him. No buts.

Author's Note:

comments and kudos are, as always, appreciated.

find me on tumblr, my main is [@fivehargreeves](#) and
my writing blog is [@lowriting](#)!